



Gurbir S. Grewal, *Attorney General*

Kaitlin A. Caruso, *Acting Director, Division of Consumer Affairs*

Continuing Education Waiver Program for Mental Health Professionals

Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

February 22, 2021

Providers are encouraged to check the Division of Consumer Affairs [website](#) for additional information.

The State of New Jersey COVID-19 Information Hub is [here](#).

The NJ Department of Health COVID-19 Information Hub for Health Care Providers is [here](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic has taken an unprecedented toll on the mental health of New Jersey residents and frontline healthcare professionals. While mental health challenges can be addressed through the services of mental health professionals, there is an unfortunate scarcity of mental health professionals with the capacity to provide these services on a volunteer basis to individuals with limited ability to pay or to those frontline healthcare professionals who are supporting the State's COVID-19 response. Additionally, the Division of Consumer Affairs recognizes that continuing education requirements may further reduce the already-limited time these mental health professionals have to provide volunteer services to those who need them the most during this public health emergency. By partially waiving continuing education requirements for mental health professionals who provide volunteer services to frontline healthcare professionals, low-income patients, and other at-risk populations, the Division hopes to encourage the provision of mental health services to those most in need of them at this time.

Accordingly, the Division has created a program through which mental health professionals may count volunteer hours toward their required continuing education credits by providing volunteer mental health services.

Q: Who can count volunteer hours toward their required continuing education credits through the program?

- Licensed marriage and family therapists;
- Licensed associate marriage and family therapists;
- Licensed professional counselors;
- Licensed associate professional counselors;
- Licensed rehabilitation counselors;
- Licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselors;
- Certified alcohol and drug counselors;
- Licensed art therapists;
- Physicians who provide psychiatric services;
- Advanced practice nurses who provide psychiatric services;
- Licensed psychologists;
- State-certified psychoanalysts; and
- Licensed clinical social workers.

Q: How many continuing education credits can a licensee satisfy using volunteer hours through the program?

For every two hours of qualifying volunteer services they provide, licensees can offset one credit of continuing education.

The number of credits a licensee will be able to satisfy by providing volunteer services, per two-year renewal period, is as follows:

- Licensed marriage and family therapists: up to 20 contact hours;

- Licensed associate marriage and family therapists: up to 10 contact hours;
- Licensed professional counselors: up to 20 contact hours;
- Licensed associate professional counselors: up to 20 contact hours;
- Licensed rehabilitation counselors: up to 10 contact hours;
- Licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselors: up to 10 contact hours;
- Certified alcohol and drug counselors: up to 15 contact hours;
- Licensed art therapists: up to 10 contact hours;
- Physicians who provide psychiatric services: up to 10 Category I continuing medical education credits;
- Advanced practice nurses who provide psychiatric services: up to 15 hours;
- Licensed psychologists: up to 10 credits;
- State-certified psychoanalysts: up to 5 credits; and
- Licensed clinical social workers: up to 10 credits.

Q: What are “volunteer mental health services?”

“Volunteer mental health services” are mental health services that are provided:

- For free, either to low-income patients who are uninsured or to frontline healthcare professionals; or
- Through an organization that provides mental health services, including crisis intervention and referrals, to low-income, uninsured individuals or to individuals in crisis. This includes organizations like crisis hotlines in addition to organizations that provide one-on-one mental health services.

Q: Which patients are considered low-income?

For purposes of the program, a patient will be considered low-income if they meet U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) income limits, which is set at an annual income that is 50% of the area median income. A table of HUD income limits can be found [here](#).

Q: Who are frontline healthcare professionals?

Frontline healthcare professionals are healthcare professionals licensed or certified to practice in New Jersey who provide direct, in person care to patients. Direct, in person care includes things like testing; general, primary and emergency care; and care provided at Department of Health-licensed facilities.

Q: Which organizations that provide mental health services qualify for the program?

A list of organizations that have told the Division that they qualify, and are seeking volunteers, is available [here](#).

Q: What records should I keep regarding volunteer mental health services I provide?

You should maintain professional records of services provided as required by the board that issued your license.

If you provide volunteer mental health services, you should also maintain contemporaneous records indicating the number of hours of volunteer services provided. So, if you are volunteering through an organization, document the time you spend working through that organization. If you are directly providing free care to low-income, uninsured patients or frontline health care providers, keep enough information about those patients to demonstrate that the services you provided for them qualify for this program. Keep those records for the same period of time that your licensing board requires you to keep any continuing education records. If you have questions about how long that is, you can reach your board by phone or find their regulations on their website by clicking [here](#) and navigating to “Boards and Committees.”

Q: Do I have to send proof to the board that issued my license that I have provided volunteer mental health services in order to obtain continuing education credit for those services?

No. Unless specifically requested by the licensing board, there is no need to send proof.